

x137 year. They produce an erect and robust plant with bright green leaves and numerous spreading underground rhizomes on which more bulbs are borne a few inches below the surface. Some stolons are produced above ground as well, from among the leaves. They afterwards turn downwards, entering the soil close to the parent plant and thereafter behaving in all respects like the rhizomes. The flowering stalk is three-angled and unjointed, with a cluster of compact, spiky inflorescences at the top, some on slender secondary stalks and some almost sessile. The parent plant is in a sense annual, for both it and the bulb producing it wither at the onset of winter, but the fresh bulbs which have been produced form new plants, and the species is capable of spreading very rapidly by this means. The bulbs are rounded, half an inch in diameter with a sharp point at the top, and covered with several papery brown layers which may be removed to expose a pale nut-like body.

Sedges usually favour damp places, but this species seemed equally at home in seepy areas and well-drained ones, and in the sandy country near Nama Pan it was common nearly everywhere, sometimes scattered among the grasses but more often in patches. Its range is from Cape Town to the Mediterranean, and it occurs in Australia also.

262 The bulbs are edible, and seemed to be a fairly important food of the northern Bushmen. The taste is sweetish and they have a crisp texture and a cloudy, very slightly astringent juice. Light roasting improves the flavour. They are easily gathered by scratching away the top layer of soil, and their presence is often shown by the disturbed soil where they grow, for they are a favourite food with many birds and small animals, which scratch and burrow to find them. According to the *Flora Capensis* the plant "has been for nearly a century cultivated in Europe".

x137 *Hyphaene ventricosa* Kirk (5301).

Eastern !khū Bushman !hani and !hena

This palm is bushy when young, but loses its bushy habit as it matures, forming a long clean stem 40 feet in height with a crown of leaves at the top and often with a slight swelling near the middle. The leaf has a strong woody rhachis up to six feet long, slightly hollowed above and rounded below, with a row of sharp hooked spines at intervals of an inch or so along each margin. At its tip it bears the leafy part which is two feet across and folded like a fan. The fruits, a little smaller than a tennis-ball, are covered with a glossy brown papery skin, and are borne in clusters.

Old and half-decayed fruits were found in the neighbourhood of Nama Pan, presumably where they had been discarded by Bushmen, but the palm trees themselves were not seen in this area. Only one specimen was found, 20 miles to the north-east. It was immature and had neither flowers nor fruits. According to available records, it was growing near the southern limit of its range, which extends to northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo.

262 There is a quarter-inch edible mealy layer immediately underlying the skin of the fruit. It is fibrous and dry but sweetish, with a pleasant flavour, and may be gnawed off the hard inner shell into which it merges.

114 [272] The kernel in the centre of the mature fruit is hard and bony and inedible, but Chapman (1868:II:73) states that the milk of the young fruit may be used like that of the coconut, and that the whole of the young fruit may BE EATEN AFTER BOILING, "PULP, RIND, AND ALL."

Adansonia digitata L. Photograph 32.

Eastern !khû Bushman *m

The Baobab, as it is commonly called, is shown in photograph 32. Its stem may have a circumference of up to 148 feet, and makes it quite unmistakable. In winter it is leafless but in summer it bears dense dark-green foliage. The flowers are pure white and up to six inches across, and the fruits, as described by Codd (1951: 120) are "oblong or egg-shaped, five to six inches or more in length and three to four inches in diameter, with a woody shell which is softly grey-velvety on the outside".

The southernmost specimens were seen in the neighbourhood of Ghanzi, and from there it occurred sporadically to Gautscha Pan, the furthest point north reached by the expedition. There were big gaps in its distribution and it was rare throughout, but in some parts of the Transvaal it occurs abundantly and may have an unbroken distribution over many square miles of country. It is widely distributed in the drier regions of north and south tropical Africa.

Inside the shell of the fruit is a white, pith-like substance which may be eaten raw, or ground up and stirred into water to make a drink, or boiled to make a porridge. It has an acid-sweet taste. The seeds which are embedded in the flesh are also edible and are eaten like nuts. In other parts of Africa they are prepared in a somewhat involved way which includes protracted boiling, fermenting and drying. There are several records of the fact that the young leaves make quite a good substitute for spinach, but as the expedition was during the winter and as the trees are deciduous, I cannot say whether the Bushmen know of this, nor whether the trees we saw were of the glabrous variety which is the one used for spinach. No seedlings were seen. It is known that the white shoot from the germinating seed can be used as a substitute for asparagus, and that the tender root of the very young Baobab is also edible (Dalziel, 1937: 113). The trees are often hollow, and like *Boscia albitrunca* and *Ricinodendron rautenii* may act as reservoirs for rain water which can be used in times of scarcity. The Bushmen reach it by fitting hollow grass stalks end to end to form a tube, and sucking it out. A further product of the Baobab is a large caterpillar which feeds upon the leaves and which is an important article of food among the Natives of the northern Transvaal. It is recorded also from South West Africa, and is very likely known to and used by the Bushmen.

Ochna pulchra Hook. (5273) Photograph 33.

Eastern !khû Bushman !! and !e:i

A semi-deciduous tree with a clean but usually rather twisted bole which is white to light gray and has a peeling bark. The branches are bent and rigid and the wood brittle. They bear glossy light green alternate leaves which are almost sessile and usually entire, rarely with a very finely toothed margin. The tree has an attractive appearance even in winter, and the young leaves add to this in the spring for they range from pale green to reddish-brown. The flowers are borne in early summer, in showy scented bunches. They have yellow petals and a green calyx, which persists after the petals have fallen and turns bright red. The fruits are hard and green when immature but turn fleshy and black as they ripen. There are usually two or three, the size and shape of small beans, attached to a fleshy red swelling in the centre of the flower. The leaves have been suspected of causing poisoning in stock, but tests carried out on mammals have so far been inconclusive. (Uys and Thomas 1952, Steyn, 1949: 125.)

137X

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[272]271
312
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825

137X

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her hind leg raised, looking wild with her cocoa-colored mane²²⁴ that stood stiff and straight along the bowed crest of her neck, wild with her great horns sharp enough to prick your finger, and her pale, half-open eyes.

Gai squatted beside her and began to stroke her udder. He²²⁴ squeezed a teat and milk squirted into his palm, and as he²⁷² licked it off, Ukwane squatted beside him. The gemsbok was big enough for both men to squat at her udder milking, Ukwane under her lifted thigh. I was told that when the men had first followed her, they had come upon a gemsbok calf wedged high up in the fork of a tree. A leopard had killed it and left it there, and as the men tried to climb the tree to pull it down, robbing the leopard, the mother gemsbok had reappeared and challenged them, so they had killed her instead. That is why her udder was filled with milk. Her beige hide, we noticed, had been raked by the leopard's claws.

Almost everyone came by with a palm outstretched for a squirt of milk. Ukwane called for me to come, too, and, stroking the milk veins in her udder the way one does when milking a cow, he milked a white stream into my palm which I licked away. The milk was strong and rank and gamy, not at all like the mild, sweet-tasting milk of cows. It smelled like the intestines, too, perhaps because the animal was dead, perhaps because the odor of intestines and the milk both came from the strong, harsh grass of the country. Yet it was liquid, and the Bushmen milked her dry.

Afterward, Gai and Ukwane butchered her, Gai preparing²²⁴ himself by casually sharpening his knife on her narrow, heart-²³⁷ shaped hoof. Always working so that her wounded side was up, they cut her skin free, not spilling a drop of blood. Near the carcass they dug a shallow pit, which they lined with the skin, hair side down, and as blood would well up into the cuts they made butchering, they would collect it and place it in

²²⁴this bowl. The carcass itself, now red and pink and white,
²³⁷they rolled onto a bed of leaves and branches to keep it clean
and cut off the front and hind legs of the upper side, forming
a bowl of the carcass so that no liquid would escape. They
pulled out the intestine, cleaning each length carefully, first
squeezing out all fecal matter, then turning the intestine in-
side out over a stick and scraping it clean. A lot of liquid ran
from the intestines, which was saved with the blood in the
bowl of the body.

²²⁴ Next, the two men removed the rumen, the first stomach
²³⁷of ruminant animals, where the grass they bolt hurriedly is
²⁷²kept in quantities to be coughed up and chewed thoroughly
when the animal is lying in the shade. Ukwane lifted the ru-
men out carefully, like a great water sack that might burst
suddenly, and hurried with it to the pit lined with the skin.
There he slit it and water gushed out, every drop saved by the
skin. Ukwane and Gai removed handfuls of the contents, a
yellow, pulpy mass of partially digested grass, and they
squeezed each handful dry into bowls, tsama-melon rinds, and
ostrich-egg water-containers that the women had brought for-
ward. They did not mind two great white worms that were
discovered living in the rumen, for as soon as enough water
was collected, the people all had a long, satisfying drink. Some
was pressed on me by Tsetchwe; I could not bring myself to
drink it, but I did taste it and found that it was not too un-
pleasant, although it also tasted strongly as intestines smell.
It was fresh, however, it was only the liquid from grass, and
I thought that if I had no other water I too could drink the
water of rumen.

Also, the people drank the blood, scooping it out in hand-
fuls to their faces. Soon they were stained with it; the three
old women looked very savage, and Gishe, our interpreter,

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asked Ukwane for some, which Ukwane gave him. Gishe said: ²²⁴
 "I have been living among Europeans for a long time, but I ²³⁷
 remember now who I am." ²⁷²

From the body of that gemsbok the Bushmen bailed out ²⁵¹
 several bucketfuls of liquid, enough to supply them for almost
 a week. They cut the meat into strips which they would dry
 in the sun and use as they needed them, also enough for a
 week or perhaps even longer, as there were only a few people
 and the gemsbok was almost as big as a cow.

Tsetchwe had built a tiny fire beneath a tsama melon, an ²⁵²
 empty melon with the top cut away, and when she received
 her share of the meat—for any animal is divided at once by a ²²⁴
 rigid system of rules, some meat given to each person rather ⁴²²
 than kept as a communal supply or portioned to families—
 she cut a small piece and stuffed it into the melon, where
 melon juice, heated through the rind, was boiling now. It
 cooked like meat in a stew, and when it was done Tsetchwe
 emptied the melon into a bowl, fanned it to cool it, and then ²⁶⁴
 ate some, putting a strip of meat into her mouth and hack-
 ing off a bite with her husband's knife. She was ravenously
 hungry and she ate almost all, while her baby, lying in her ¹⁸⁵³
 lap, nursed from her breast. The last piece she saved for him;
 she put one end of it into his mouth and, as he bit down,
 flashed the great knife under his nose to cut him a small
 enough morsel.

The gemsbok had vanished. All that remained from the ²²⁴
 butchering was the pile of squeezed, dry grass from the ru- ⁴²²
 men and a few lumps of feces that the redheaded flies buzzed
 over. The meat, bones, head, hide, and brushlike tail all now ²³⁷
 belonged to people, and all the people had carried their por-
 tions away. Gai owned two hind legs and a front leg, Tse-
 chwe had meat from the back, Ukwane had the other front